



ETIHAD AIRWAYS ADVISES ON OPERATIONAL STATUS AND OUTLINES RE-START PLANS

News / Airlines



Etihad Airways has provided an update on its current and planned operations as COVID-19 travel restrictions remain in place around the world. Subject to UAE government imposed travel restrictions being lifted on passenger travel, Etihad plans to operate a reduced network of scheduled passenger services from 1 May to 30 June, with the aim of gradually returning to a fuller schedule as and when the global situation improves.

Etihad is also continuing to operate a growing schedule of special passenger flights allowing foreign nationals in the UAE the opportunity to travel out of the country, and to carry essential belly-hold cargo such as perishables, pharmaceuticals, and medical supplies. To date, the airline has also repatriated almost 600 UAE nationals on return services.

Tony Douglas, Group Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Aviation Group, said: “The term ‘unprecedented’ is currently the most used in our industry, and the most appropriate. The monumental challenges being faced by all airlines, and our customers, have been beyond measure. However, we remain cautiously optimistic and will push ahead with our plans to resume normal flying, while striving to better serve and support our customers and our employees.

“While the intention is to assume a ‘business as usual’ approach to the restart of our operations, the aviation landscape has changed, and how it will look month by month is difficult to predict. This has necessitated a fundamental shift in focus for us. However, the cumulative gains achieved by our ongoing transformation, and the unwavering support of our shareholder, has left us in a relatively strong position to withstand any instability. We will pivot on this and act with agility to seize opportunities we may not have previously considered.

“We are implementing a series of network-wide route and fleet efficiencies, while conducting an extensive brand study and trialing new service concepts in our guest experience proposition. We are also using this time to drive further internal improvements in the efficient use of automation and technology across all areas of the business, while maintaining productivity, creativity and quality.”

Network and Fleet

Currently, Etihad is using 22 Boeing 787 Dreamliners and 777-300ER passenger aircraft, with five more ready for service, to complement its operational fleet of five 777-200F freighters. These aircraft are providing scheduled and special passenger and belly-hold cargo services to several destinations worldwide.

Since 25 March, approximately 500 special passenger, freighter and cargo flights have been operated. These include passenger and belly-hold freight flights to Amsterdam, Bogota, Brussels, Dublin, Frankfurt, Jakarta, London Heathrow, Manila, Melbourne, Paris Charles de Gaulle, Seoul Incheon, Singapore, Tokyo Narita, Washington, D.C., and Zurich, with other destinations planned.

Etihad has revised the launch date of its inaugural service to Vienna from 22 May to 1 July.

Etihad Cargo is now operating up to 100 turnaround flights per week to 32 destinations on five continents. In addition to normal scheduled cargo services, special freighter and humanitarian flights have been flown to Addis Ababa, Amsterdam, Beijing, Bogota, Bucharest, Copenhagen, Chennai, Cochin, Dublin, Frankfurt, Jeddah, Johannesburg, Karachi, Khartoum, Kiev, Milan, Paris, Rome, Shanghai, Tbilisi, Wuhan, and Zagreb. More special flights will be introduced in the coming weeks.

Most extensive maintenance programme in Etihad’s history

With 80 per cent of its passenger fleet on the ground, the airline has embarked on the biggest aircraft maintenance programme in its history. Etihad Engineering, the group's Engineering Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) division, is performing maintenance work on 96 passenger aircraft including 29 Airbus A320 and A321s, 10 Airbus A380s, 38 Boeing 787s, and 19 Boeing 777-300ERs. The programme ranges from minor maintenance tasks, such as seat repairs and updates to Inflight Entertainment Systems, to bringing forward scheduled engine changes and modifications on several aircraft, eliminating the need to withdraw them from service when flights begin operating again.

To date, this work has seen almost 19,000 seat covers laundered, and over 40 rolls of new carpets and 367 metres of leather used. Furthermore, approximately 5,000 aircraft touch points have been checked, and more than 4,000 parts fabricated through the engineering workshop.

Customer care and Loyalty

The main priority is to provide continued support to its affected customers and the airline has introduced a range of travel waivers, solutions and benefits to help ease the burden the pandemic is having. Customers who booked directly with the airline before 31 August 2020, now have greater flexibility to change their bookings or to utilise generous value-added Etihad Credit where possible. This credit will provide each customer with the value of their current unused ticket and up to US \$400, plus up to 5,000 Etihad Guest Miles, for future travel. Additionally, for tickets purchased directly from Etihad within Europe or the United States, a refund is also available if requested.

Etihad Guest, the airline's loyalty programme, is supporting members to retain and upgrade their Tier Status through a number of initiatives while they remain unable to travel during this period. In addition to receiving the monthly bonus Tier Miles, members who achieved 80 per cent of the qualifying requirements will be extended or upgraded for 12 months. Members who achieved less than 80 per cent of the qualifying requirements will be extended for three months. Etihad Guest Miles that expired in March and are due to expire in April or May, will be extended for three months for members who have been active with the programme over the last 18 months. Members can also donate their miles to charities including the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Emirates Red Crescent, who are supporting vulnerable refugees impacted or at risk as a result of COVID-19.

Community

Etihad's award-winning catering unit, Etihad Airport Services Catering (EAS), has been commissioned by various government entities, business organisations and community centres, to prepare and provide meals to individuals impacted by the global spread of COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic, EAS has cooked and delivered over 15,000 meals a day to people self-isolating or under quarantine, frontline medical staff, humanitarian drives and for various businesses across Abu Dhabi.

EAS is also delivering amenities and providing a laundry service for Etihad employees living in temporary isolation at the airline's eco-residences in Masdar City so they can continue to operate essential freighter and special passenger flights. These include loadmasters, cargo agents, pilots and cabin crew. Etihad crew living in company provided accommodation and requiring a meal delivery service are also being catered for free of charge.

"There have been lessons to be learned. In the early days of this pandemic, the disruption created

by border closures and subsequent cancellations meant we were unable to effectively deal with the disruption our customers faced, despite our best efforts. We are tremendously pleased that we now have generous and considerate solutions that will undoubtedly deliver tangible benefits to them today, and when the time is right for them to travel again.

“The invaluable loyalty of our customers, our travel trade partners, and a phenomenal workforce which has continued to go above and beyond, despite taking temporary reductions in salary, will guarantee the security and continuity of the UAE’s great national airline,” concludes Mr. Douglas.

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